



INDUSTRY CIRCULAR

DEPARTMENT OF
THE TREASURY

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

Washington, D.C. 20226

Number: 80-10

Date: November 17, 1980

STANDARDS OF IDENTITY FOR VODKA

Proprietors of Distilled Spirits Plants, Importers,
and Others Concerned.

PURPOSE. The purpose of this circular is to inform industry members that an ATF Ruling will be published in a future issue of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Bulletin. The ruling will read substantially as follows:

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has been asked to reconsider whether the use of up to two-tenths of one percent of sugar and a trace amount of citric acid would not materially affect the taste or change the basic character of vodka.

27 C.F.R. 5.22(a)(1) sets forth the standard of identity for vodka as "neutral spirits so distilled, or so treated after distillation with charcoal or other materials, as to be without distinctive character, aroma, taste or color." 27 C.F.R. 5.23(a)(2) describes the harmless coloring, flavoring or blending materials which may be added without altering the class and type of distilled spirits. 27 C.F.R. 5.23(a)(3)(ii) provides that harmless coloring, flavoring and blending materials shall not include any material whatsoever in the case of neutral spirits.

Revenue Ruling 56-98, 1956-1 C. B. 811 specifically held that the use of up to two-tenths of one percent of sugar and a trace amount of citric acid would not materially affect the taste or change the basic character of vodka. However, recent tests by the ATF National Laboratory Center have shown that the chemical and physical characteristics of neutral spirits treated in accordance with Rev. Rul. 56-98 have been measurably changed. In addition, taste tests have shown that a difference can be detected between vodka containing sugar and citric acid, as allowed in Rev. Rul. 56-98, and vodka containing neither of these materials.

Held, Neutral spirits to which sugar and/or citric acid have been added may not be designated or labeled as vodka.

The requirements of this ruling are effective immediately and apply to all new formula and label applications. The Bureau will, however, permit the use until December 31, 1980, of all previously approved formulas and labels for vodka which do not meet the requirements of this ruling. Certificates of label approval issued under such formulas, and the formula approvals themselves, shall be surrendered for cancellation upon the close of business December 31, 1980.

Rev. Rul. 56-98, 1956-1 C. B. 811 (Internal Revenue), is hereby revoked.

Inquiries: Inquiries concerning this circular should refer to its number and be addressed to the Assistant Director (Regulatory Enforcement), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20226.

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